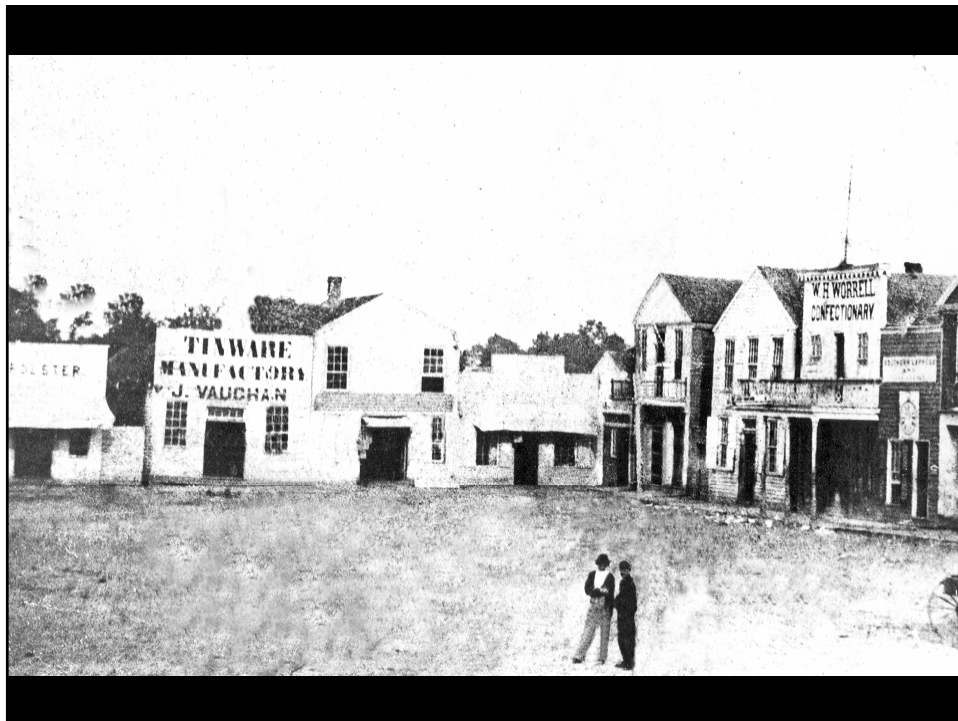


Springfield's Public Square, 1829 to the Present

Springfield was founded by John Polk Campbell in 1829. He donated fifty acres of land to Springfield in 1836, two of which were used for the Public Square. The Square was laid out with the streets entering from the sides instead of the corners. The old Boonville Road was called Boonville Street. College Street was named for a small college on the north side of the street. The White River Trail was called St. Louis Street because it led to St. Louis, and South Street was given its name simply because it led south.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lohist/postcards/public_square.cfm

Through the years many things have occupied the center of the Public Square. The first structure was believed to be a log courthouse. The second courthouse was a two-story, red brick building, also in the center of the Square. It was built in 1836 with the proceeds of the sale of the other 48 acres deeded to Springfield by John Polk Campbell. This courthouse burned in 1857 and a new courthouse was built at the northwest corner of Boonville and the Square. http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm



The Springfield Public Square was the site of some activity during the Civil War. After the Battle of Wilson's Creek in 1861 both the old and new courthouses were used as army hospitals. Later in 1861 the old courthouse burned during a Union cavalry raid. Major Zagonyi led three cavalry bodyguard units in a charge through the Public Square. His 300 men routed the 1,500 Confederate men out of Springfield.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm

Springfield was left mainly in Confederate hands until 1862 when the Federal Army marched from Rolla. By this time the town was in terrible shape with many buildings damaged and many homes burned. The Public Square was restored with prison labor. On January 8, 1863, Confederates attacked Springfield but they failed to reach the Square in the Battle of Springfield.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm

In the wake of the Civil War, Springfield helped give birth to the Wild West era. In July 1865, the town square was the site of the nation's first-recorded shootout. The incident between "Wild Bill" Hickok and Dave Tutt was also significant due to the incredible marksmanship exhibited by "Wild Bill" that made him known worldwide.

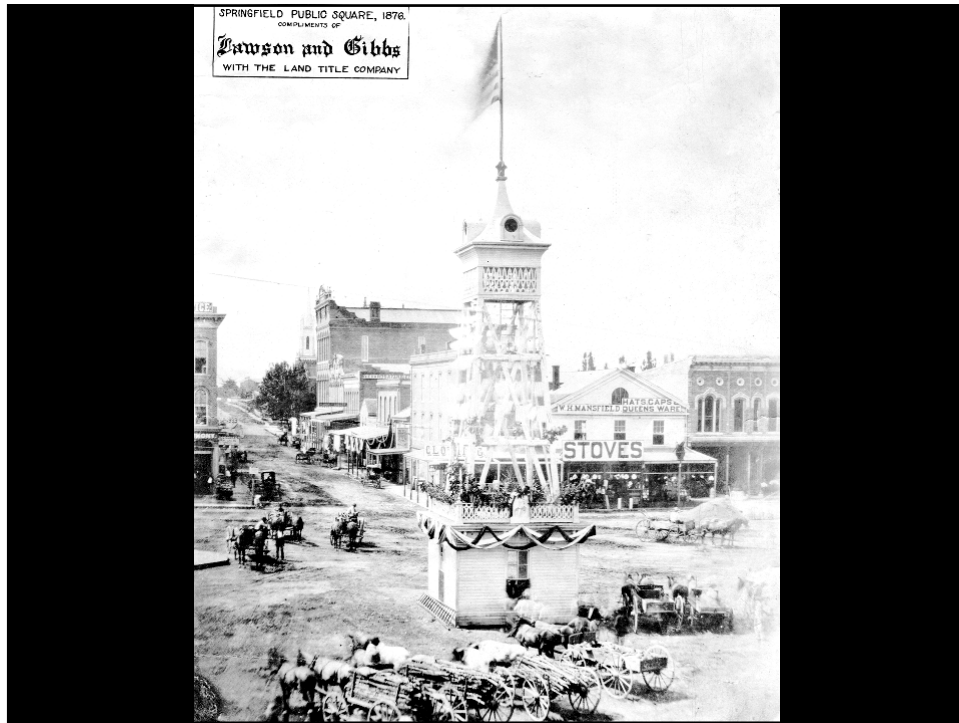
Following a poker game in Kelly Kerr Saloon on the Public Square, Tutt claimed Hickok owed him money and took his pocket watch as collateral. Tutt claimed he would wear it in public to show that Hickok didn't pay his debts.

The next day from 75 yards away, Tutt fired a shot at Hickok, barely missing his head. Hickok fired back and killed Tutt with a bullet through the heart. The event made nationwide news.

http://www.springfieldmo.org/final/newsite/ttd_page_history.asp

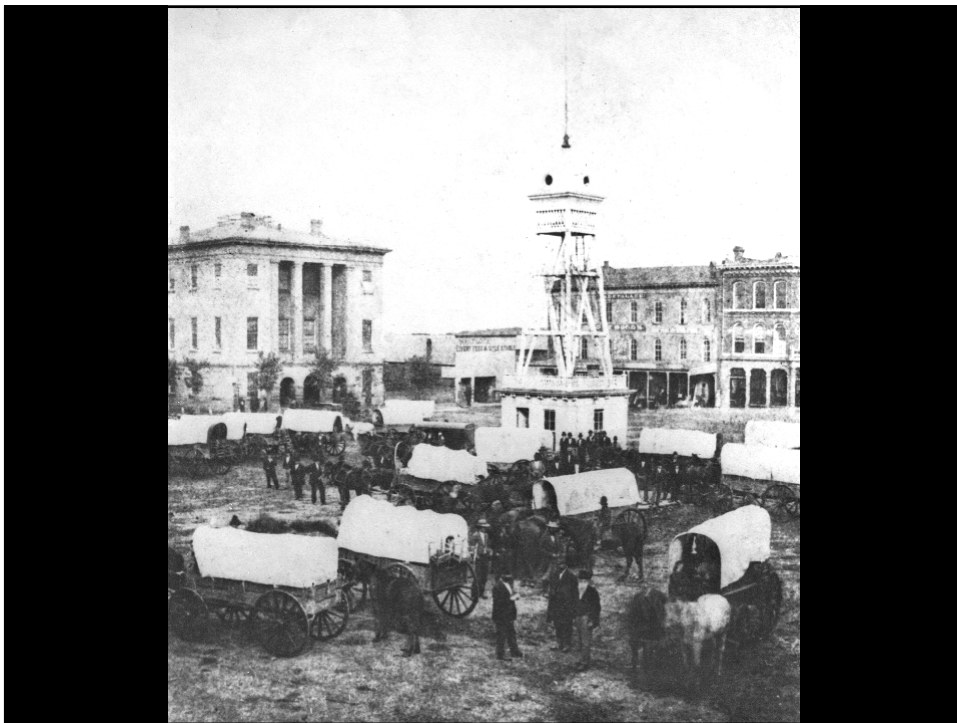
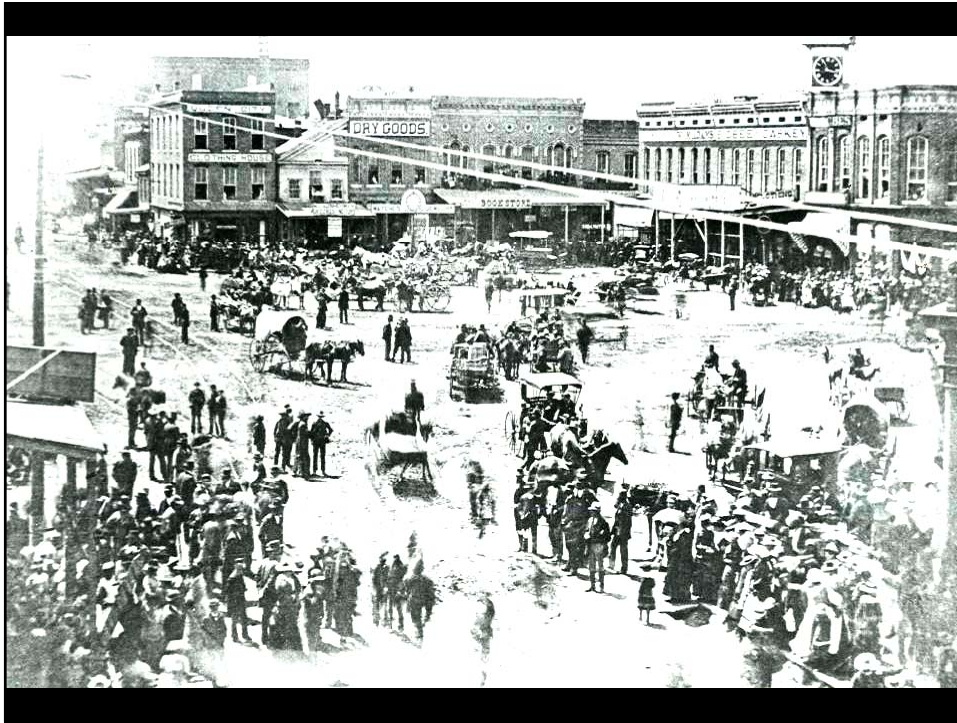
In 1871 (or possibly 1876) a wooden bell tower and bandstand were built in the center of the Square. The bell was rung when there was a fire to alert the volunteer fire department.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lohist/postcards/public_square.cfm



Strange as it may seem, Springfield had a parking problem prior to the advent of automobiles. The newspapers were replete with complaints about the shortage of hitching racks on the Square and in the business district. Police officers who patrolled the business district complained about the tandem hitching of rigs. One driver would hitch his horse to a post. Another would hitch his horse to the rear wheel of the first rig, with sometimes three rigs in a row. Patrolmen also complained that citizens thought nothing of asking them to hold their horses during a brief shopping errand or a trip to the bank. Roy Ellis, *Shrine of the Ozarks*,

Southwest Missouri State College, 1968



The tower remained until 1882 when it was razed to make a place for the stone monument to General Nathaniel Lyon.

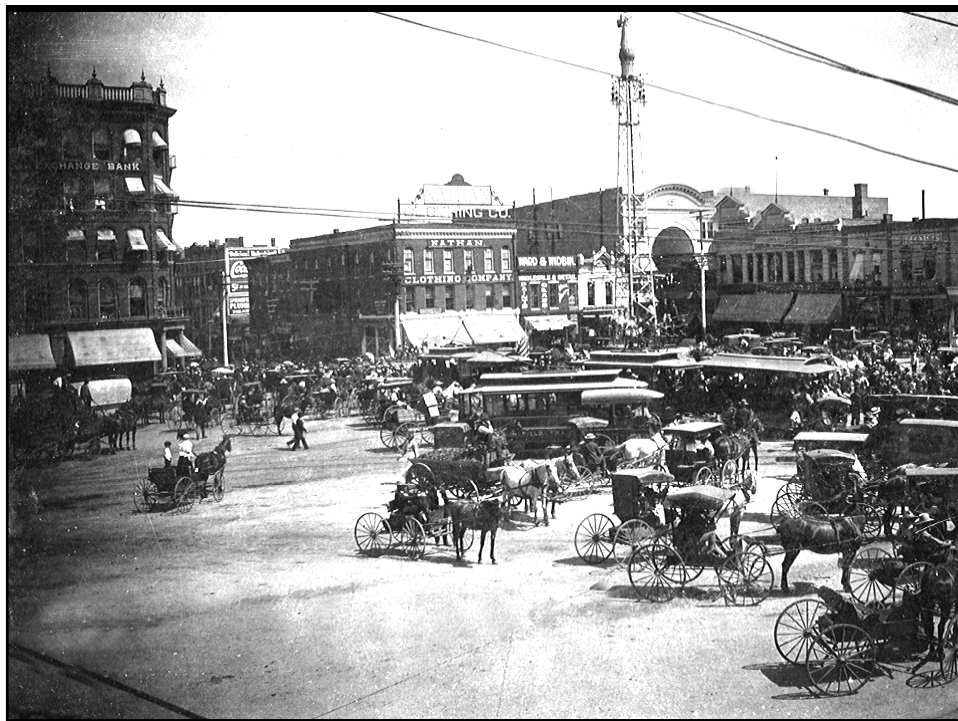
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This monument was placed in the Springfield National Cemetery in 1884, and it remains there.

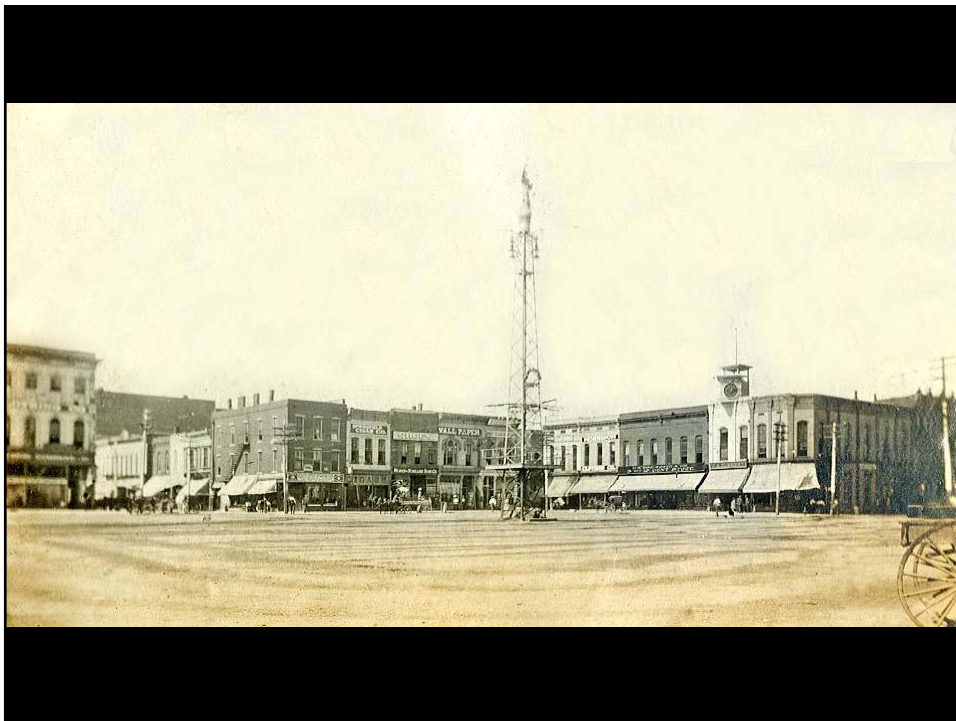
In 1895 the Gottfried Tower was erected. It was an iron tower with a white iron statue of liberty on the top and a band platform ten feet above the base. It was also called the Electric Tower.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm



The tower gained notoriety when three black men were forcibly taken from the jail and murdered by an angry mob on Easter Sunday of 1906. The three men were hung from the Gottfried Tower and their bodies were burned in a huge fire at its base.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm

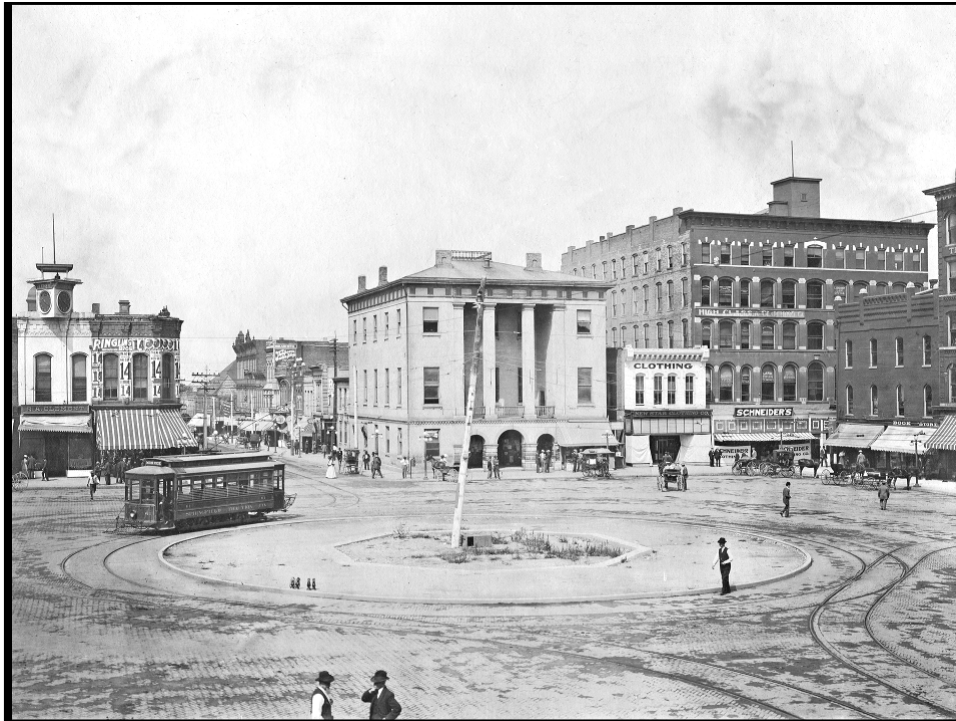


In 1909 the Gottfried Tower was removed and used by the Springfield Fire Department for training until it became too unsafe to use. It was then destroyed. The statue of liberty became a garden ornament at the home of Charles Callis of Springfield. It was later broken into pieces and used to fill a fishpond.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lohist/postcards/public_square.cfm

In the fall of 1909 brick pavement was built around a circular area by the Springfield Traction Company (a trolley company). For a while a large circular area in the middle was left unpaved.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lohist/postcards/public_square.cfm



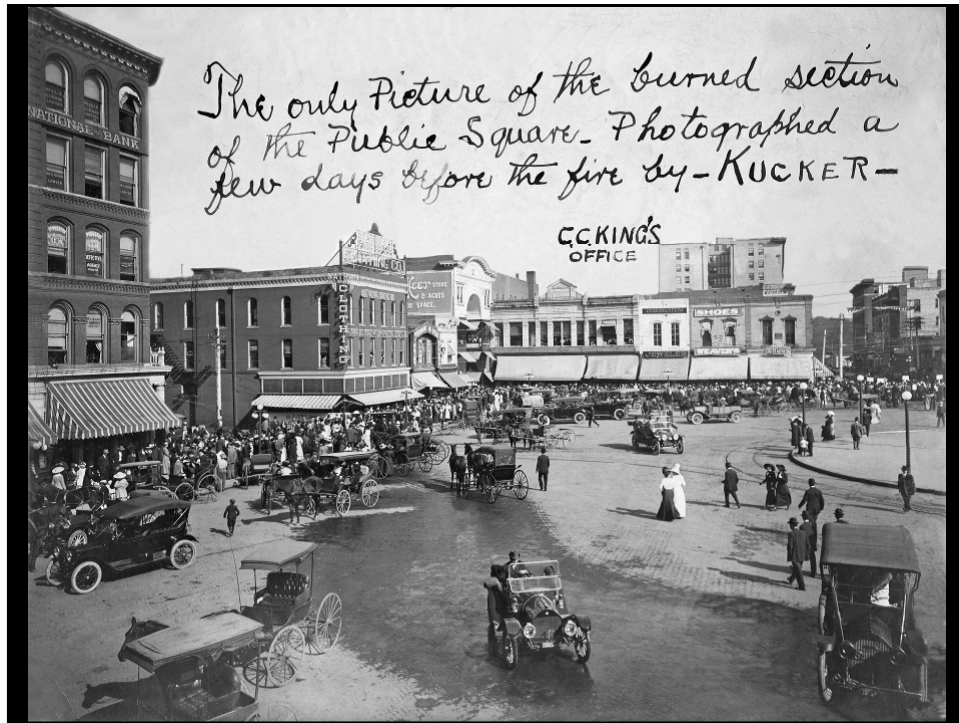
Finally, in the same year, the circular area was filled with concrete by the City of Springfield and the area was thereafter called "The Pie." Circling the Pie was a common pastime. It was also a familiar parade route.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm



On June 9, 1913, a huge fire burned the northeast corner of the Square. The fire began in the Heer's store and then spread to Reps, Osborne, Weaver, Ross, the Queen City Bank, Widbin and Fox and the Nathan Clothing Store. The loss from this fire was estimated at \$800,000.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm



In 1914 the courthouse was demolished and replaced by a new Heer's Store. In 1932 Harland Bartholomew of St. Louis created a plan for the Public Square including a fountain and landscaping in the circle, but the bond to provide the financing was defeated in an election in 1943.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm





**In 1947 the Pie was removed and crossroads traffic
was allowed to go through the center of the Square.**

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/postcards/public_square.cfm



Another plan to spruce up the Square from 1964 to 1968 was defeated with the bond election of 1968. In 1969 the Downtown Springfield Association agreed to finance improvement efforts for the Square, which had been in a period of decline for many years. In 1969 the federal government provided \$1 million in grant money. This along with Downtown Springfield Association pledges exceeding \$500,000 allowed the Public Square to be changed to Park Central Square. The city council approved a design for a pedestrian plaza with an enclosed two story canopy.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm

Lawrence Halprin & Associates' Design

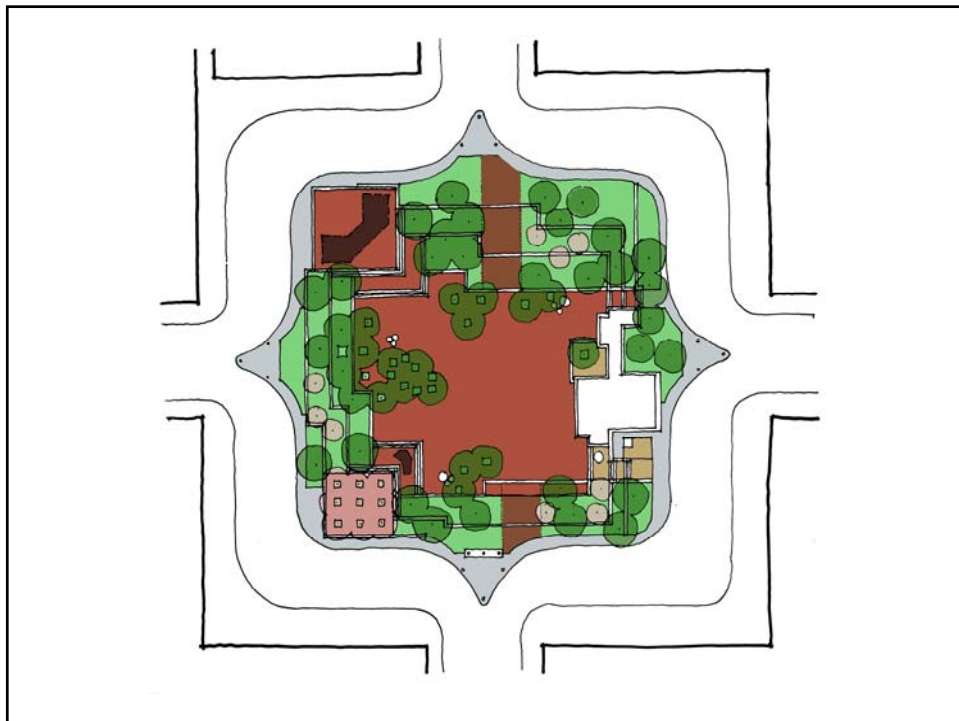
Lawrence Halprin & Associates, May 19, 1970

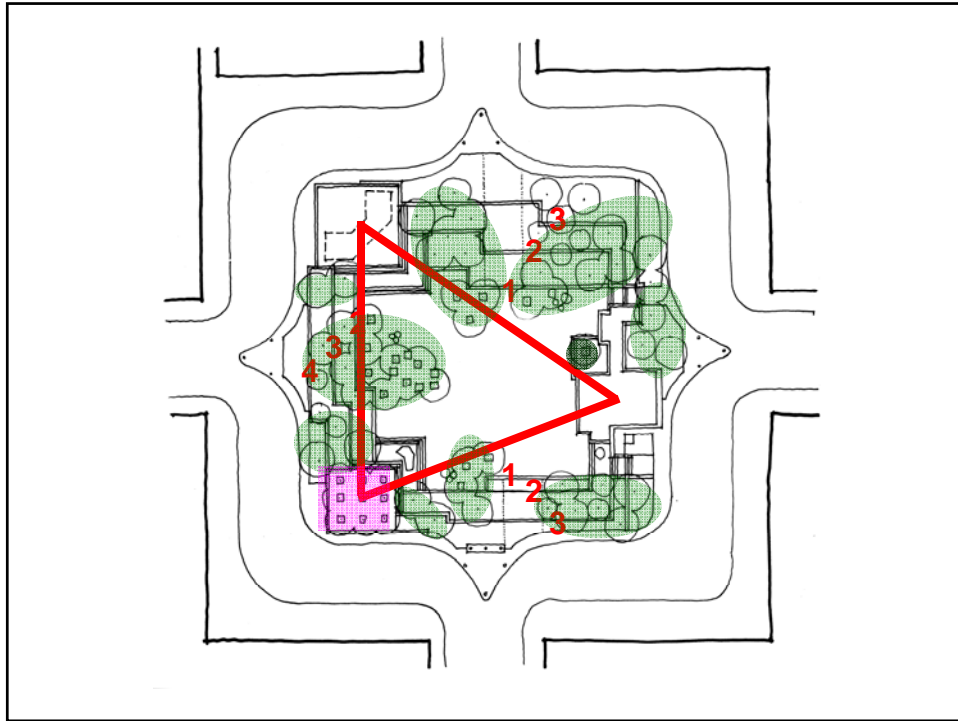
This [Park Central Square] work came after the [Halprin & Associates, founded 1949] firm was already consulting in Missouri [on the Civic Center Master Plan for Kansas City of 1966]. The design for Springfield came about as shopping malls such as Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis, MN, were gaining popularity. These public spaces were also becoming cultural centers, with art becoming widely incorporated. The fountain at Springfield was meant to present abstraction and it had a lot to do with design. Architect Charles Moore likely influenced the Pavilion design, including its clipped corners.

Lawrence Halprin, in an interview with TCLF President Charles Birnbaum

Lovejoy Square, Portland. Halprin & Associates, 1965-1966





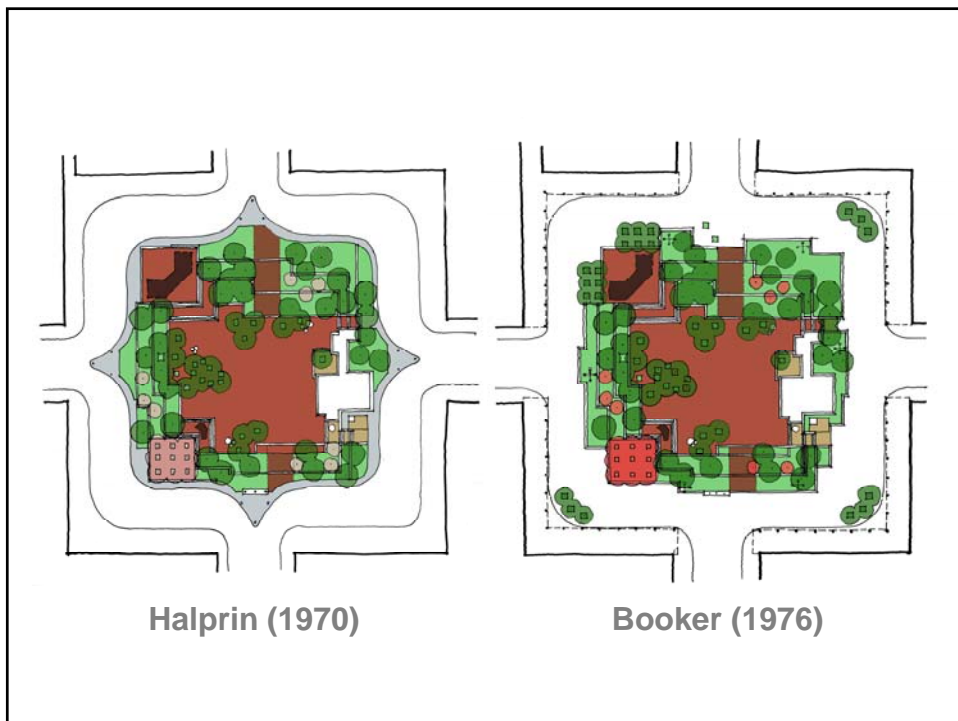
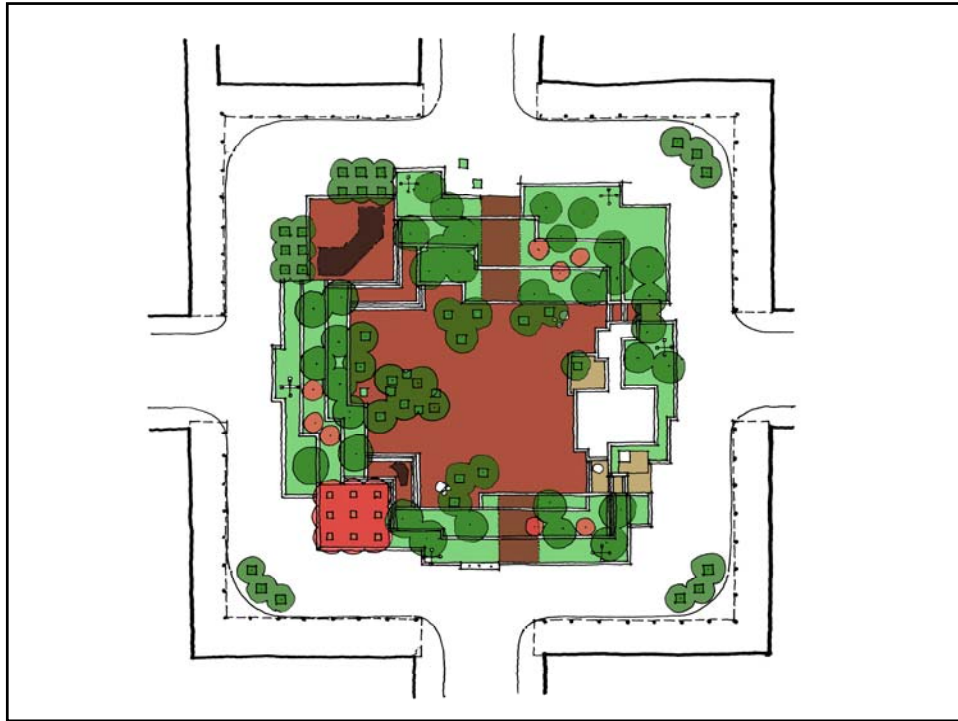


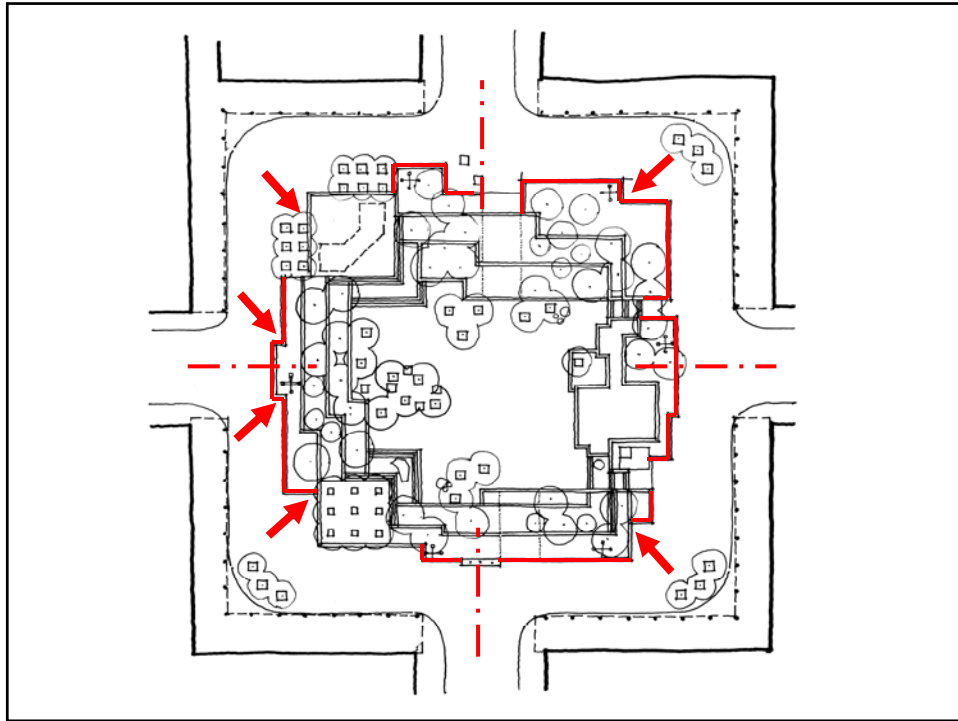
The Square was closed to vehicular traffic in 1974.

http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/postcards/public_square.cfm

Park Central Square Closure

R.W. Booker & Associates, April 5, 1976





In 1985 \$300,000 was spent to reopen the north and south sides to automobile traffic. In 1989 the east side was reopened. In 1999 the “tuning forks” at the east and west ends of the square were decommissioned and two-way traffic was returned to McDaniel and Olive Streets.

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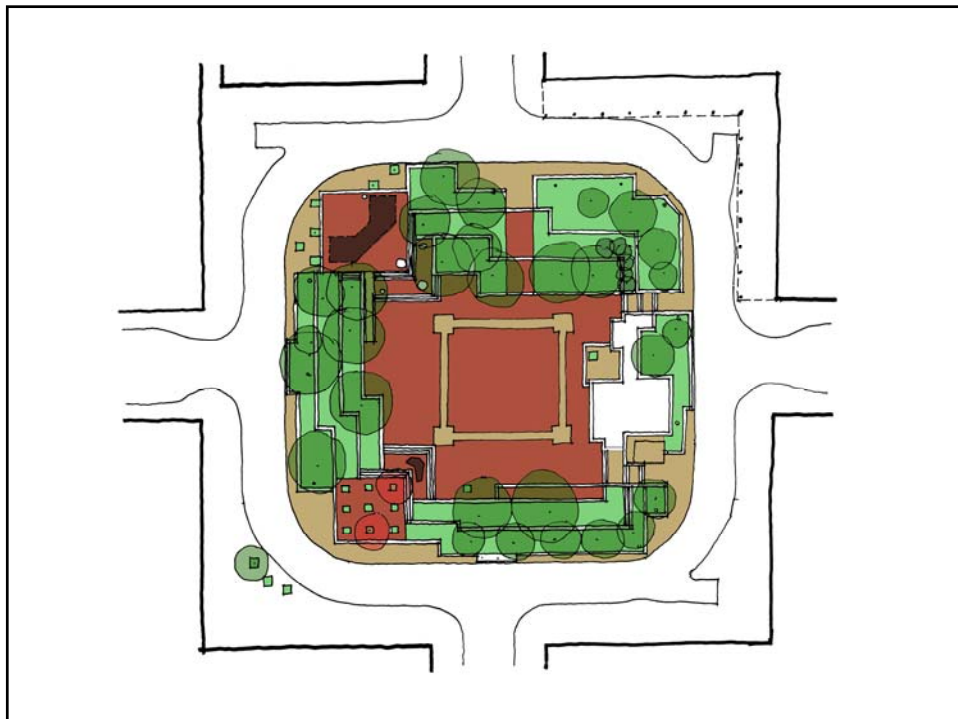
Park Central Today

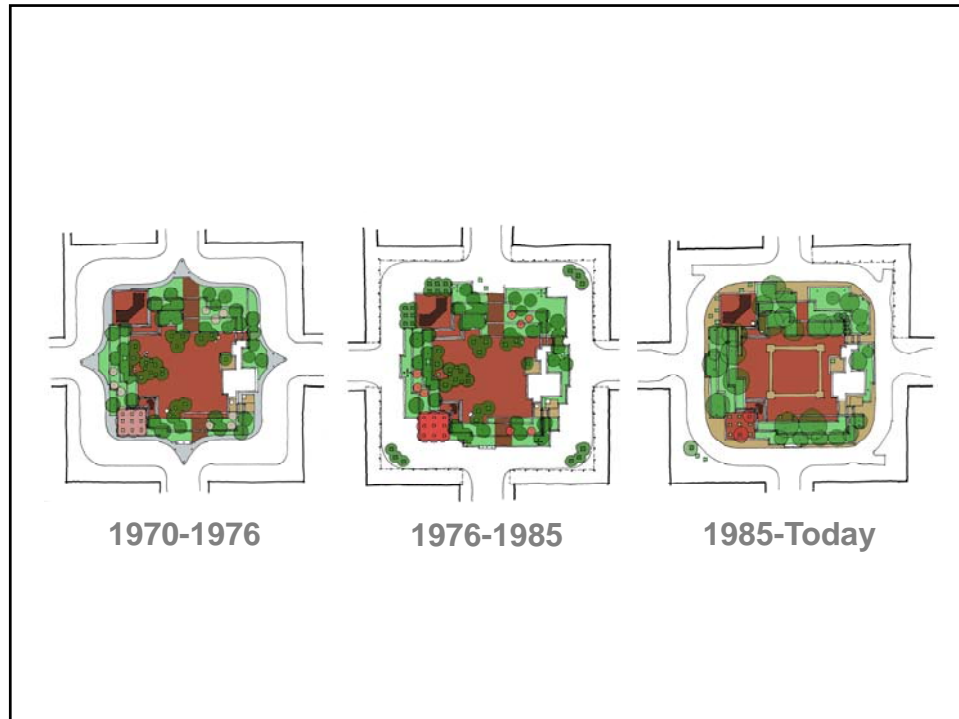
In a downtown filled with lovely prewar buildings, Park Central Square sticks out like a weedwhacked thumb. While the square's perimeter is home to some interesting places...the square itself needs help. It looks like the love child of a French university and a Soviet ministry: '70s, brutalist, concrete, a den for people with nothing to do and their joyless anomie. It was installed as part of a misguided pedestrianization scheme that, it was hoped, would help downtown compete with Battlefield Mall. The plan failed. Gregory

Holman, *Writerly observations and more from the center of Springfield, Missouri* weblog, June 7, 2007

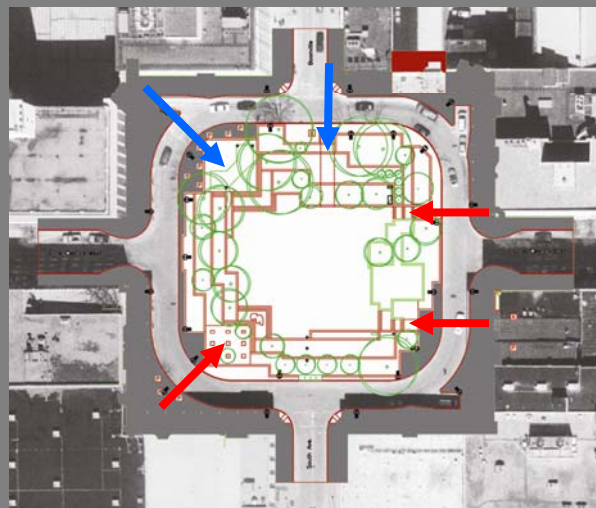
I find that troubling, given Park Central Square used to be the heart of the Queen City. Sadly, the renovation and construction on the old Herr's [*sic*] building has stopped. If it doesn't continue, I worry places like Riad's and Trolley's will not draw the numbers of people they need to stay in business. Park Central Square is a diamond in the rough, and in order for Springfield to truly grow up and be a real "city" it needs to bring places like that back to life.

Anonymous, *The Snarling Marmot* weblog, June 15, 2006





Access in, out, and through Park Central Square is limited. There are five access points, of which two are accessible to wheelchairs.



There is no continuous sidewalk around Park Central Square, making walking around and through that much more difficult and inconvenient.



Visibility in and out of Park Central Square is limited. This makes police patrolling more difficult, attracts loitering, and creates an overall unsafe feeling environment.



The “natural” gateways of the streets leading to the Square lack prominence and inward access. No signage says “Park Central Square.”



East Gateway



South Gateway

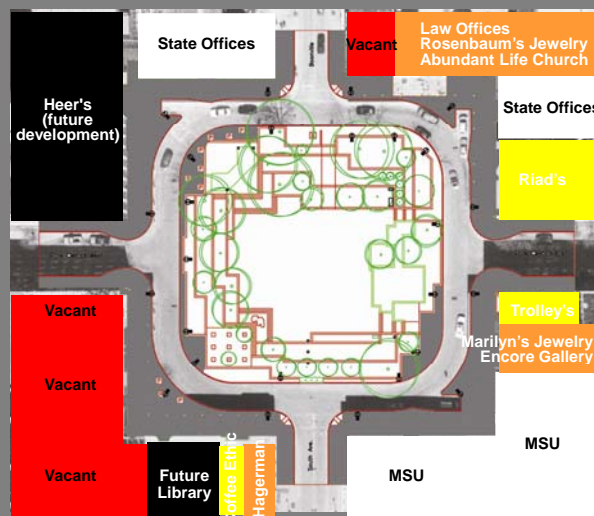


North Gateway



West Gateway

There are few active ground floor uses and several vacant buildings that do not positively support Park Central Square.





Tinted windows turn their backs to Park Central Square.



Inactive ground floor uses create experiential voids.



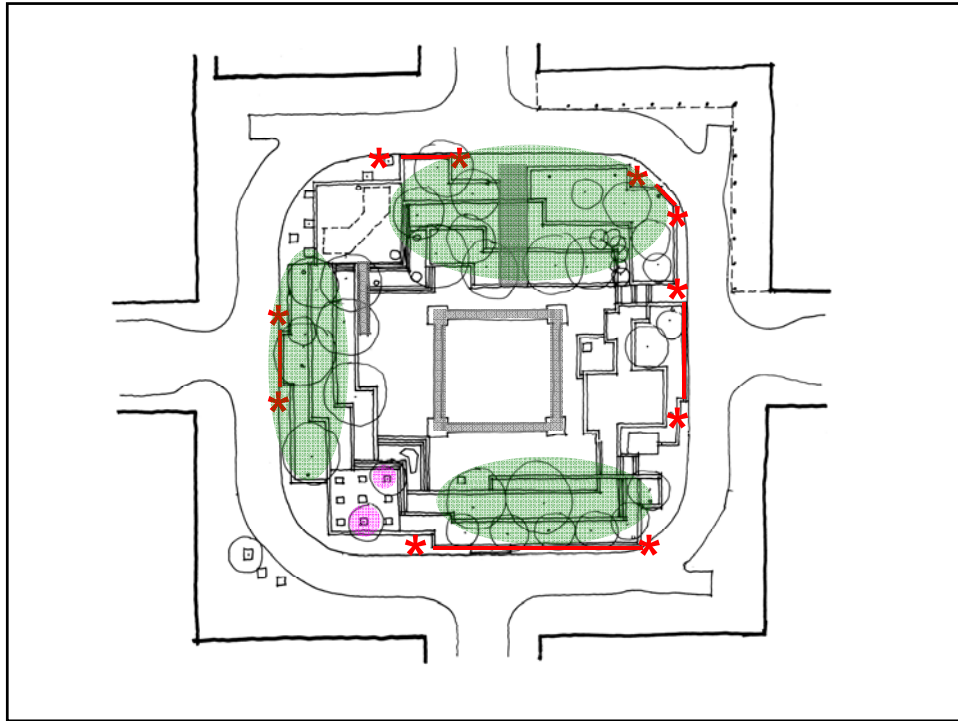
Vacant buildings are opportunities to develop with Park Central Square.

Without programmed events and active edge uses, Park Central Square looks and feels barren, and attracts the wrong kind of activity.

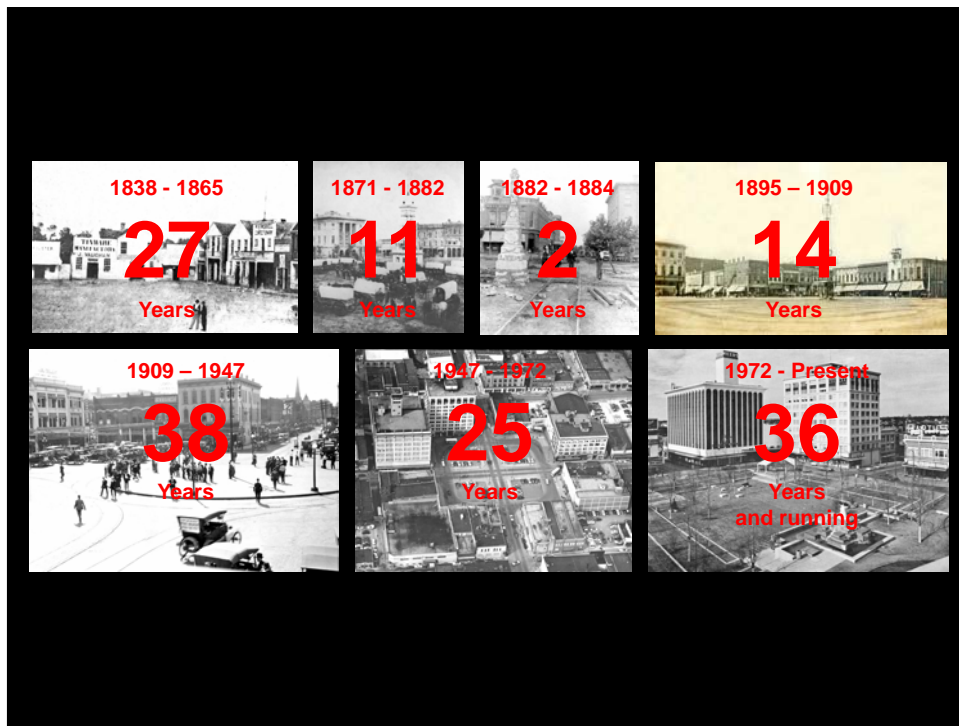


Lighting is also an issue.





- **Changes over time**
- **Artifact that is an activity area**
- **Safety**
- **Access and accessibility**



This is a unique piece of urban landscape designed by Lawrence Halprin, the single most important landscape architect in the United States...It's hard for Springfield to distinguish itself from the 30 other Springfields. We shouldn't be remembered for being the one that bulldozed a historic landmark.

Springfield City Councilman Dan Chiles, February 11, 2008

Until some folks raised a stink that it was designed by a famous [landscape] architect there was a general consensus to can what's there and build something else. Let's be real...very very few people are going to come to Springfield to see this square just because it was built by Lawrence Halprin. ...The majority of people just don't care who designed it. They just know they don't really like it and they don't use it. ...A new square isn't going to have that much of a rekindling effect on the resurgence taking place downtown. That will happen when the square is filled with vibrant, relevant businesses. They are right that keeping the fountain is more than enough to keep Halprin's work alive. Jason Wert, *Life of Jason* weblog, February 16, 2008

The city has applied for federal money to demolish our square, but that money comes with strings. In brief, permitting cannot legally begin until a Section 106 review has been completed, which results in a determination of "no historic resources," "no adverse effect" upon historic resources or "adverse effect" upon historic resources...I predict Springfield is in for a long and bitter fight if we try to spend federal tax dollars to demolish Halprin's work. Councilman Chiles, "Meet with square's original architect to get consensus," *Springfield News-Leader*, February 15, 2008

